

**Jews and the Civil War**  
**JWST310 / HIST310**

**Instructor:** Adam Mendelsohn  
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**Course description**

This class, which coincides with the sesquicentennial commemoration of the Civil War, will introduce you to the Jewish experience of the conflict, particularly the challenges they faced on the home front and on the battlefield. The class will focus on issues that related specifically to Jews – rabbinical responses to the slavery, antisemitism in North and South, Congressional controversy over the appointment of a non-Christian chaplain – but will also, whenever possible, compare their experience with that of other ethnic minorities and immigrant communities. We will make extensive use of primary documents during lectures and discussions to supplement the required readings. Each student will be expected to prepare an original research paper that draws upon newspaper or archival sources.

**Course Requirements**

Attendance/Preparation/Participation: You are required to attend every class. Regular class attendance and careful preparation of all assigned readings - in advance of each class - are absolutely essential to success. (For example, readings under August 30 must be read before class on August 30.) You are expected to be in class with the readings completed and prepared to contribute to class discussion in a meaningful way. Please note that readings are uneven and plan accordingly. Students absent for legitimate reasons should bring their documentation to the Office of Student Affairs (66 George Street) who will send a confirmation email to all of your professors. I will pass a sign-up sheet around the room each day – be sure to sign it. Late arrivals count as absences. The attendance grade is lowered five points for every unexcused absence, starting at 100% (so that one absence still receives an A). For example, two unexcused absences result in a 90%, three result in an 85%, etc. Naturally your participation grade will also suffer if you are not in class to participate, and inevitably the material you miss will hurt your work as well. Any student who fails attendance will automatically fail this class – no exceptions. Students who miss an excessive number of classes due to medical or other emergency should see me to arrange a medical withdrawal.

Written Assignments: Evaluations will be based on attendance, participation in class discussion and two long papers. You will write one historiographic paper **DUE OCTOBER 19** analyzing a major theme or question relating to the scholarly literature on the Civil War. You will also write one original research paper **DUE DECEMBER 5** drawing on primary and secondary sources. Late papers – beginning one minute after the start of class – will be penalized one full mark (e.g. A to B, B to C) if submitted within one week of the due date. Thereafter, until the last day of class, papers will be accepted but penalized two full marks.

### Grading

Attendance:	10%
Participation:	15%
Historiographic paper:	25%
Research Paper	50%

### Grading Criteria

As a rough guide, these are the criteria I will use when grading your papers. There is no precise weighting for each category, so that strengths in one aspect can compensate for weaknesses in another. Content and writing are weighted equally, and are by nature largely inseparable.

	<b>A (90-100%)</b>	<b>B (80-89%)</b>	<b>C (70-79%)</b>	<b>D (60-69%)</b>	<b>Fail</b>
<b>Relevance</b>	Directly relevant to the subtleties of the question/topic	Directly relevant to the question/topic	Mostly relevant to the question/topic	Includes some irrelevance or generalization	Little or no relevance
<b>Knowledge</b>	Excellent range of knowledge	Good familiarity with sources, shows awareness of important issues	Adequate knowledge of a reasonable range of material	Limited acquaintance with basic sources	Little or no knowledge
<b>Analysis</b>	Consistently analytical to a high level	A good analysis	Some analysis but with a tendency towards description or narrative	Limited analysis, largely descriptive or narrative	Little or no analysis
<b>Originality</b>	Shows	Some evidence	Limited	Unoriginal	Derivative or

	originality, independence of thought and approach	of originality	evidence of originality		plagiarized
<b>Argument</b>	Logical, clear and coherent argument	Coherent and logical argument	Predictable or superficial argument	Argument lacks coherence and clarity	Little or no argument
<b>Use of Evidence</b>	Arguments well supported using primary and secondary material appropriately	Good use of primary and secondary sources	Some use of source evidence, but more needed	Limited provision of evidence, paper based on basic sources	Little or no substantiation of argument
<b>Presentation</b>	Excellent writing, clean of grammatical errors, awkward sentences, etc.	Well-written, largely clean of such errors or awkward sentences	Generally well-written, with some lapses in proper spelling, syntax, etc.	Poorly written, poorly proofread	Carelessly written, badly presented, full of errors
<b>Bibliography &amp; references</b>	Full and appropriate	Full and appropriate	Mostly full and appropriate	Partial documentation	Little or no documentation

### **Honor Code: Statement on Cheating and Plagiarism**

The Honor Code of the College of Charleston forbids cheating, attempted cheating and plagiarism. A student found guilty of any of these offenses will receive a grade of “XF” in the course, and may be subject to additional penalties such as suspension or expulsion from the College, at the discretion of the Honor Board. See the *College of Charleston Student Handbook*, for definitions of these offenses. If you have any questions, please see me.

Plagiarism is defined by the Student Honor Code as:

1. The verbatim repetition, without acknowledgment, of the writings of another author. All significant phrases, clauses, or passages, taken directly from source material must be enclosed in quotation marks and acknowledged either in the text itself or in footnotes/endnotes.
2. Borrowing without acknowledging the source.
3. Paraphrasing the thoughts of another writer without acknowledgment.
4. Allowing any other person or organization to prepare work which one then submits as his/her own

**Required texts**

Textbooks are available for sale at the College Bookstore but may be significantly cheaper on the internet. Other readings are available on OAKS.

David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (Oxford, 2006)

Bertram Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War* (Philadelphia, 2001)

Adam Mendelsohn and Jonathan Sarna, eds., *Jews and the Civil War* (New York, 2010)

James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York, 1997)

Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill, 1997)

Eric Foner, *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (New York, 2005)

Schedule (subject to change with notice)

**Week 1**

**Wed, August 24**

**Introduction: Why was the War Fought?**

**Week 2**

**Mon, August 29**

**The Settlement of Jews in the New World**

OAKS: Eli Faber, *A Time for Planting: The First Migration*, 4-51

Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 124-140

**Wed, August 31**

**The Status of Jews in antebellum society**

OAKS: Gemma Romain, "Ethnicity, identity and 'race': the port Jews of nineteenth-century Charleston," *Jewish Culture and History* 7,1-2 (2004): 123-140

Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 1-14

**Week 3**

**Mon, September 5**

**Slavery in the United States**

David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 193-230

**Wed, September 7**

**Jews as slaveholders and slave traders**

Mendelsohn and Sarna, *Jews and the Civil War*, 87-122

**Week 4**

**Mon, September 12**

**Jewish slaves and Jewish supporters of slavery**

OAKS: Lauren Winner, "Taking up the Cross: Conversion among Black and White Jews in the civil War South" in Catherine Clinton, ed., *Southern Families at War* (New York, 2000): 193-209

Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 175-192

**Wed, September 14**

**Jews and Abolitionism**

Mendelsohn and Sarna, *Jews and the Civil War*, 125-156

Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 231-267

**Week 5**

**Mon, September 19**

**Walking Tour of Jewish and Slave Sites**

**Wed, September 21**

**What caused the Civil War?**

Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 268-296

OAKS: James M. McPherson, *This Mighty Scourge: Perspectives on the Civil War* (New York, 2007), 3-20

**Week 6**

**Mon, September 26**

**Rabbis and Slavery on the eve of the Civil War**

Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 32-55.

Mendelsohn and Sarna, *Jews and the Civil War*, 181-196

**Wed, September 28**

**Divided loyalties: American Jews take sides**

Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 9-29

Mendelsohn and Sarna, *Jews and the Civil War*, 201-226

**Week 7**

**Mon, October 3**

**Why did men fight?**

McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 14-61

**Wed, October 5**

**Jews within Confederate ranks**

Mendelsohn and Sarna, *Jews and the Civil War*, 227-252

**Week 8**

**Mon, October 10**

**Jews within the Confederate Government**

OAKS: Eli Evans, *Judah P. Benjamin, the Jewish Confederate*, 115-136, 211-244

**Wed, October 12**

**Jewish Suppliers to the Confederacy**

Harold Wilson, *Confederate Industry: Manufacturers and Quartermasters in the Civil War* (Jackson, MS, 2002), 3-41: Available as an EBook via the library catalogue

**Week 9**

**Mon, October 17**

**FALL BREAK**

**Wed, October 19**

**How accepting was the Confederacy of Jews?**

OAKS: Marc I. Greenberg, "Ambivalent Relations: Acceptance and Antisemitism in Confederate Thomasville," *American Jewish Archives* 45 (1993), 13-30.

**Week 10**

**Mon, October 24**

**Women on the Home Front**

Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 80-113

Mendelsohn and Sarna, *Jews and the Civil War*, 267-306

**Wed, October 26**

**Jews in the Union Army**

McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 77-103

Mendelsohn and Sarna, *Jews and the Civil War*, 253-264

**Week 11**

**Mon, October 31**

**Jewish Suppliers to the Union**

Reading TBA

**Wed, November 2**

**The Chaplaincy Question**

McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 62-76

Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 56-97.

**Week 12**

**Mon, November 7**

**“Jews as a class”**

Mendelsohn and Sarna, *Jews and the Civil War*, 311-334

Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 156-188

**Wed, November 9**

**Grant and the Jews**

Mendelsohn and Sarna, *Jews and the Civil War*, 353-384

**Week 13**

**Mon, November 14**

**Reconstruction**

Mendelsohn and Sarna, *Jews and the Civil War*, 387-398

Foner, *Forever Free*, 107-158

**Wed, November 16**

**Jews and African Americans during Reconstruction**

Foner, *Forever Free*, 159-180, 189-213

**Week 14**

**Mon, November 21**

**Jews and African Americans in the age of Jim Crow**

OAKS: Louis Schmier, "A Jewish Peddler and his Black Customers Look at Each Other," 223-236

**Wed, November 23**

**No Class -- Thanksgiving**

**Week 15**

**Mon, November 28**

**The Racial place of Jews in the post-Civil War South**

Foner, *Forever Free*, 214-238

OAKS: Leonard Rogoff, "'Is the Jew White?': The Racial Place of the Southern Jew," *American Jewish History* 85:3 (1997): 195-230

**Wed, November 30**

**Historians Look Back**

Mendelsohn and Sarna, *Jews and the Civil War*, 27-46

**Week 16**

**Mon, December 5**

**CONCLUSIONS**

**RESEARCH ESSAY DUE IN CLASS TODAY (December 5)**