

Sociology of the American Jewish Community

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Sociology 410, Section 001 Winter 2007

Monday/Wednesday 2:30-4 1359 Mason Hall

Office Hours: Mon 1-2:30; Th 2-4

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This course will examine the lively tension between tradition and change within the American Jewish Community as it reviews current issues and explores broadly the sociological literature on American Jewry.

The class will examine the conflicts and struggles of American Jews as they strive to maintain themselves in a pluralistic society. Students will explore topics such as Jewish identity and assimilation, intergroup and intragroup relations, group survival, relations with Israel and new understandings of diaspora. Students will look at the broader context of American society, including issues of democratic values, religious freedom, and social stratification. The class will examine differing viewpoints about the demographic, structural and ideological components comprising the American Jewish community, including community concerns for self-defense and survival, and issues of religion, race, power and privilege. What do American Jews mean by "community" and how best to define the diverse communities of the American Jewish Community? The course will also take some time to explore the process of intergroup and intragroup dialogue as a model for discussing contentious issues facing the Jewish community.

The course will be conducted seminar style, and its success will depend heavily on active student participation (15%). There will be discussion of readings, films, and student presentations of book reports and research papers. Regular attendance is expected, of course, and *students who miss more than five class meetings will receive a failing grade for the course*. Written work includes a 6-8 page essay (on social identity or analysis of the everyday Jewish experience) (25%), a take-home essay exam (30%), and a collaborative 10-15 page research paper (30%). Graduate students in the course will be responsible for an additional paper.

Week-to-Week Syllabus

Part One – Introduction to the Course and to Dialogue

Week One - (January 8, 10)

Required Readings: Herzig and Chanin, Musser and Sutherland, Schoem, Kaplan

Films: Gefilte Fish, Seeds of Peace, Jewish-Palestinian Dialogue

Part Two - Exploring Jewish Identity

Week Two - (January 15 – MLK Day – no class; 17)

Understanding the Transformationist/Assimilationist Debate

Required Readings: Book: Goldscheider, (Chapters 1, 6),

Coursepack - Schoem, Waxman

Recommended Reading: King

Week Three - (January 22, 24)

Jewish Survival: Individual, Community, and the Interfaith Marriage Debate

Required Readings: Book: Goldscheider (Chapter 2)

Coursepack – Barack Fishman, Cohen and Eisen, Horwitz

Week Four – (January 29, 31)

Dialogue on Gender and Jewish Identity

Required Readings: Atkin and Rich, Brod, Geller, Spencer

Part Three – The Jewish Community(ies)

Week Five (February 5, 7)

Rethinking Community, Israel and Diaspora

Required Readings: Book: Aviv and Shneer (Introduction, 1, 2, Epilogue);

Coursepack - Rosenthal

Week Six – (February 12, 14)

Unity, Diversity, and Conflict

Required Readings: Alpert et. al., Goldberg, Tobin et. al., Wertheimer et.al.

Recommended Reading: <http://www.jtsa.edu/cjls/>; Cantor

Week Seven (February 19, 21)

Meaning-Making in Individual and Communal Jewish Life

Required Readings: Florida, Putnam, Rosenn, Schwartz

Film: Bubbeh, Lee and Me (Monday)

Paper Due on Feb. 21: Social Identity or Every Day Jewish Experience Paper

(Spring Break – February 26 and 28)

Part Four: Democracy Matters: Freedom, Power, and Vulnerability

Week Eight - (March 5, 7)

Jewish Community, Social Capital, Power, and Powerlessness

Required Readings: Boyte, Moore Lappe

Recommended: (ctools online) Goldberg, Lipet

Film: Jews, Movies, Hollywoodism and the American Dream (Monday)

Week Nine - (March 12, 14)

American Freedoms: Racial Identity and Privilege

Required Readings: Goldstein, Lester, McKinney

Recommended: (ctools online) Tatum

Week Ten (March 19, 21) (Dinner at David's on March 21)

American Freedom: Jewish Vulnerabilities, Anti-Semitism, and Defense

Required Readings: Dinnerstein, Fogelman, Foxman, Lipset and Raab

Recommended: (ctools online) Chesler

Film: Not In our Town

Week Eleven (March 26, 28)

Difficult Dialogues: The Jewish Community, Academic Freedom and Campus Debates on Israel

Required Readings: Jaschik, O'Neill, Tobin, Wolfe

Take-Home Exam Due on March 28

Week Twelve (No Regular class on April 2, 4; Class will be held on Friday March 30, 2-4pm; location tba)

Difficult Dialogues: American Freedom and Religious Pluralism

Required Readings: Boston, Dalton, Eck

Recommended: (ctools online) Tatum

Part Seven - Final Papers/Reports

Week Thirteen (April 9, 11)

Student Presentations

Week Fourteen (Monday, April 16)

Student Presentations

Research Paper Due on April 16

Assignments and Grades

Each Student will complete 1A or 1B, a take-home essay exam, and a research paper.

1A. Every Day Jewish Experience Paper – (25%) 6-8 pages

This is an analytical journal documenting your observations and analyses of your experiences with Jews and/or with the Jewish community during this semester. Students should keep a weekly journal that is synthesized into a cohesive comprehensive paper. Students must make refer to at least 6 sources from class readings to ground the discussion and analysis in the theoretical literature. **Paper is due February 21.**

Your papers should be clearly written and well-organized with attention to all the technical aspects of writing. A bibliography is required and references must be cited in the text of the paper. The best papers will not only be well-written, but they also will be thoughtful, honest, reflective, substantive, and analytic. This is an opportunity to identify, discuss, and critically analyze important insights and themes about your observations of the Jewish community. Please use this essay to discover and say something important about yourself/your social identity. **Paper is due February 21.**

1B. Social Identity Paper – (25%) 6-8 pages

Drawing on class discussions and course readings, you will write an essay about your Jewish identity (or your experiences with Jews as those contacts have influenced your social identity) and you may focus on additional social identities such as race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc. In the essay, you will reflect upon your own individual identity, experience, behavior and attitudes in terms of your social identity(ies).

This paper serves as an opportunity for you to relate the course readings you have done this semester to help understand and think critically about your own social identity. You must make reference to at least six of the articles from the course readings.

Your papers should be clearly written and well-organized with attention to all the technical aspects of writing. A bibliography is required and references must be cited in the text of the paper. The best papers will not only be well-written, but they also will be thoughtful, honest, reflective, substantive, and analytic. This is an opportunity to identify, discuss, and critically analyze important insights and themes about your life and social identity. Please use this essay to discover and say something important about yourself/your social identity. **Paper is due February 21.**

2. Take-Home Exam (30 points)

More information will be provided in class. **Essay exams are due March 28.**

3. Research Paper (30 points) 10-15 pages

Together with one or two co-authors, select a topic of interest that is related to the syllabus outline. The class will discuss possible research topics for your consideration. Research topics and an initial outline must be submitted for approval by January 31. Please note guidelines for use of human subjects in class research papers.

The research paper is due April 16. Late papers will be penalized two full grades and will not be accepted after 12 noon, April 20. Written papers must include thorough documentation of research and citations in the text. All co-authors will receive the same grade for the paper.

4. Participation (15 points)

Active student participation is essential to the success of a seminar. At a minimum, participation includes regular attendance and attending class on time. **Students who miss more than five classes will receive a failing grade for the course.** Active participation involves completing readings on time, exercising good listening skills and paying careful attention to class discussion, contributing analytical and critical comments to discussion, asking probing and clarifying questions, and making good use of office hours. Formal class presentations are included as part of the participation grade. Students who fulfill less than the guidelines above will receive a lower participation grade.

Note the April dates for short presentations on either your research paper or your “Everyday Jewish Experience/Social Identity Paper.” Use the presentation to introduce the topic, raise key findings, questions and issues, and invite comments, discussion, and suggestions from class members.

Late Paper Policy: Late book reviews and essay exams will be penalized one full grade. Late research papers will be penalized two full grades. No papers will be accepted more than one week past the due date. (see absolute final date for the research paper)

Academic Integrity : Students are expected to maintain the highest level of academic integrity. Students are expected to submit their own work on assignments and to cite sources of ideas and information that come from others. On assignments in which collaboration is required, students will be asked to indicate the amount of work submitted that is their own. Cheating and plagiarism on papers and exams will not be tolerated.

Required Class Texts

Books (available at Shaman Drum Bookstore and the Undergraduate Library)

Aviv, Caryn and David Shneer. 2005. **New Jews: The End of the Jewish Diaspora**. NY: NYU Press.

Goldscheider, Calvin. 2004. **Studying the Jewish Future**. Seattle: U. Washington Press.

Coursepack (available at Dollar Bill Copying, the Undergraduate Library, and on CTools)

Alpert, Rebecca et.al. 2001. "On Being a Rabbi at the Margins" in Rebecca Alpert et. al., **Lesbian Rabbis**. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers U. Press. P. 173-180

Atkin, Ruth and Adrienne Rich. 1997. "'J.A.P.' - Slapping" in Estelle Disch, **Reconstructing Gender**. Mountainview, CA: Mayfield Publ., P. 45-48

Barack Fishman, Sylvia. 2004. **Double or Nothing: Jewish Families and Mixed Marriage**. Waltham, MA: Brandeis U. Press., Chapter 1

Boston, Rob. 2005. "Kingdom of Heaven" **Church and State**. June. 58/6. P. 8-11

Boyte, Harry. 2004. **Everyday Politics: Reconnecting Citizens and Public Life**. Phila: U of Pennsylvania Press, P. 1-16

Brod, Harry. 1988. "Toward a Male Jewish Feminism" in Harry Brod, **A Mensch Among Men**. Freedom, CA: Crossing Press. Chapter 181-187

Cohen, Steven M. and Arnold Eisen. 2000. **The Jew Within: Self, Family, and Community in America**. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana U. Press. P. 1-12

Dalton, Jon. 2006. "The Place of Spirituality in the Mission and Work of College Student Affairs" in Arthur Chickering et.al. **Encouraging Authenticity and Spirituality in Higher Education**. San Francisco: John Wiley. P. 145-164

Dinnerstein, Leonard. 1994. "Summary and Conclusion" in Dinnerstein **Anti-Semitism in America**. NY: Oxford, 245-250

Eck, Diana. 2001. **A New Religious America**. NY: HarperSanFrancisco. P.1-25

Florida, Richard. 2006. "The Flight of the Creative Class" **Liberal Education**. Summer, 92/3; P. 22-29

Fogelman, Eva. 2001. "Adult Offspring of Holocaust Survivors as Moral Voices in the American-Jewish Community" In **Second Generation Voices: Reflections By Children of Holocaust Survivors and Perpetrators** by Alan Berger and Naomi Berger. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse U Press. P. 208-223

Foxman, Abraham. 2003. **Never Again?** NY: HarperSanFrancisco. P.133-159

Geller, Laura. 1983. "Reactions to a Woman Rabbi" in Susannah Heschel, **On Being a Jewish Feminist**. NY: Schocken Books, P. 210-213

- Goldberg, J.J.1996. **Jewish Power: Inside the American Jewish Establishment**. NY: Addison-Wesley. P. 3-27
- Goldstein, Eric. 2006. **The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity**. Princeton: Princeton U. Press. P.209-239
- Herzig, Maggie and Mitch Chanin. 2005. **Constructive Conversations about the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**. Watertown, MA: Public Conversations Project. P. -14
- Horwitz, Bethamie. 2002. "Reframing the Study of Contemporary American Jewish Identity" **Contemporary Jewry**. Vol. 23. P. 14-34
- Jaschik, Scott. 2006. "Input or Intrusion" **Inside Higher Education**. Nov. 21. <http://insidehighered.com/news/2006/11/21/disputes>
- Kaplan, Matthew. 2006. "Getting Religion in the Public Research University" in **Academe**. July-August. Vol. 92, No. 4, P.41-45
- King, Jr., Martin Luther. 1986. "Letter From Birmingham City Jail" in **A Testament of Hope**. Ed. James Washington. NY: Harper San Francisco
- Lester, Julius. 1999. "Blacks and Jews: Where Are We? Where Are We Going?" In Maurianne Adams and John Bracey. **Strangers and Neighbors: Relations Between Blacks and Jews in the United States**. Amherst, MA: U Massachusetts Press. P. 813-822.
- Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1990. "A Unique People in an Exceptional Country" in Lipset Seymour Martin Lipset (ed.). **American Pluralism and the Jewish Community**. New Brunswick: Transaction Books. P. 3-29
- McKinney, Karyn. 2005. **Being White: Stories of Race and Racism**. NY: Routledge. P. 19-34
- Moore Lappe, Frances. 2006. **Democracy's Edge**. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. P. 3-11; 319
- Musser, Donald and D. Dixon Sutherland. 2005. **War or Words? Interreligious Dialogue as an Instrument of Peace**. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press. P. 1-4
- O'Neill, Robert. 2006. "Limits of Freedom: The Ward Churchill Case" **Change**. Sept/Oct. 38/5; P. 34-41
- Putnam, Robert and Lewis Feldstein. 2003. **Better Together: Restoring the American Community**. NY: Simon and Schuster., P. 1-10; 269-274
- Rosenn, Jennie. 2005. "At the Core of Jewish Citizenship" **SHMA**. Nov., 35/615 P. 3-5
- Rosenthal, Steven. 2001. **Irreconcilable Difference? The Waning of the American Jewish Love Affair with Israel**. London: Brandeis U. Press. P. 195-216
- Schoem, David and Sylvia Hurtado (eds.). 2001. **Intergroup Dialogue: Deliberative Democracy in School, College, Community and Workplace**. Ann Arbor: UM Press. P. 1-21
- Schoem, David. 1988. "Learning to Be a Part-Time Jew" In Walter Zenner, **Persistence and Flexibility: Anthropological Perspectives on the American Jewish Experience**. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. P. 96-116

Schwarz, Rabbi Sidney. 2003. **Finding A Spiritual Home**. Woodstock, VT.: Jewish Lights, P. 226-250

Spencer, Gary. 1987. "Jap-Baiting on a College Campus: An Example of Gender and Ethnic Stereotyping" Unpublished Monograph, Personal Copy

Tobin, Diane et.al., 2005. **In Every Tongue: The Racial and Ethnic Diversity of the Jewish People**. San Francisco: Inst. for Jewish and Community Research, P. 17-34

Tobin, Gary, et.al. 2005. **The Uncivil University**. San Francisco: Inst. for Jewish and Community Research. P.i-xv; 216-223

Waxman, Chaim. 1990 "Is the Cup Half-Full or Half-Empty?: Perspectives on the Future of the American Jewish Community?" in Lipset Seymour Martin Lipset (ed.). **American Pluralism and the Jewish Community**. New Brunswick: Transaction Books(Chapter Five, 71-85)

Wertheimer, Jack, Charles Liebman and Steven M. Cohen. 1996. "How to Save American Jews" **Commentary**. January, 47-51

Wolfe, Alan. 2006. "Free Speech, Israel, and Jewish Illiberalism" **The Chronicle of Higher Education**. Nov. 17. Section B 53/13, P. B6-B8

CTools Online – Books, Coursepack and the Following Articles

Cantor, Aviva. 1995. **Jewish Women/Jewish Men**. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, P. 255-280

Chesler, Phyllis. 2003. **The New Anti-Semitism**. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. P. 87-116.
Goldberg, J.J. 1996. **Jewish Power: Inside the American Jewish Establishment**. NY: Addison-Wesley. P. 47-79

Lipset, Seymour Martin and Earl Raab. 1995. "The Riddle of the Defensive Jew" in Lipset and Raab, **Jews and the New American Scene**, Cambridge: Harvard. 75-79

Tatum, Beverly. 2002. "Changing Lives, Changing Communities" in Kanzanjian, Victor and Peter Laurence. **Education as Transformation: Religious Pluralism, Spirituality, and a New Vision for Higher Education in America**. NY: Peter Lang, P. 79-88

Tatum, Beverly. 1997. **Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?** NY: Basic Books. P. 92-113