

RN 330/630

Fall, 2014

Office Hours:

T 9:30-10:45AM, 1:00-2:00PM, W 2:30-3:30PM, Th 9:30-10:30AM and by appointment,

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AMERICAN JEWISH EXPERIENCES, FROM CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS AND DONNA GRACIA TO WOODY ALLEN, MADELEINE ALBRIGHT AND RECENT EMMY PRIZE WINNER, SARAH SILVERMAN: HOW AND WHAT WE LEARN ABOUT IDENTITY AND THE SOURCES OF PLURALISM IN THE MODERN WORLD?

SUMMARY

As a course in the History of Religion, this class presents recent historical works that suggest new approaches to mysticism and rationality, abiding issues in understanding religion. As a course in the History of American Jewry, it presents contemporary interpretations of experiences that shaped this Jewish experience, influenced in the period from 1492 to the present moment by religion, nationalism and what we generally call modernization, and including more historical material on women and daily life than was previously available. As a course in the Sociology of Religion, this class sets a framework for defining terms such as “identity” and “pluralism.” The case studies largely include unique and “ordinary” men and women such as Christopher Columbus and Donna Gracia, Woody Allen, Madeleine Albright, and recently Sarah Silverman.

We will try to extrapolate elements of identity and attitudes towards pluralism among those associated with the Jewish people. The course has at least two beginnings: 1630 and 1492-1654. The first emphasizes the impact of Protestant denominationalism, largely as it developed in England and moved to America. These people strongly identified with biblical narratives,

yet were hospitable to Jewish refugees of centuries of Catholic persecution, including forced conversions and the terrors of the Inquisitions. The second beginning takes place under the Dutch and can be dated to 1654. This section of the course will emphasize that Jews preserved far more of their *converso* culture imported from Iberia, and how it influenced their popular beliefs and everyday practices. In surveying 1654-2010, we will use a very readable history textbook to provide a time line for our focus on communal documents, family histories, ethical wills, liturgy, sermons, music in the early period and films, popular literature, art, and artifacts, including changing trends in diet and food, often exploring similarities and differences with other Jewish communities and other American minorities in relationship to identity formation and attitudes towards pluralism.

These two early modern beginnings will be traced, as far possible, through the experiences of Jews and Judaism in relation to formative institutions, ideas, movements, and political developments: religious freedom and the making of the Republic in the Colonial period, slavery, abolitionism, industrialization in the 19th century, Zionism, socialism, and feminism in the early 1900s, full admission to the suburbs, the corporation, Hollywood, and the academy after WWII, reactions to the Holocaust and the establishment of Israel, Greenwich Village protest movements, civil rights and Jewish revival movements of the 1960s, intermarriage, identification with Israel, high tech economy and culture of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. In each period we will focus on significant Jewish men and women and ask questions about their identities and participation in pluralistic endeavors.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The readings in the first weeks will be heavier, as we develop greater historical depth and more shared analytical tools. The course will then move to focus more on particular individuals as we learn about them in brief documents and as we try to experience their dilemmas, vicariously, sometimes through dramatizations and role plays.

A proper learning environment must be based upon trust as well as effective communication between students and the instructor, and students among themselves. In this regard, we will all be “co-learners.” Various studies, as well as my own experience, lead me to believe that students get more

satisfaction from their work and learn better if it is reviewed in some framework of a group. You will be encouraged to form study groups. The motivation in preparing for exams and papers cannot substitute for this. It will, therefore, be assumed that you are well prepared and actively participating in *all* facets of learning. Timely and critical reading of the entire week's assigned readings is required during Tuesday morning meetings. Regular and active class attendance is required. Reasons for excusable absences must be documented by email. Please place RN330, no space, on the Subject Line of all of your correspondences with me. This will automatically filter it into a special folder preventing it from getting lost in the huge quantity of my daily e-mails. You do otherwise at great risk!

RULES

The course will require ongoing personal reflections on the major issues and challenging questions that you confront in the readings and the course in general. You will be expected to meet with me at office hours at least once in the first weeks of classes and again at the end of the semester. You are encouraged to keep me informed, on a regular basis, of your progress and of any problems that develop with your work. You are also expected to inform yourself of University rules governing proper behavior and responsibility in regard to your fellow students, me, and other stakeholders, enjoying, as they do, the privileges of serious education. That said, cheating is not a competitive sport. It is the precious right of people, who live in a community, to trust each other. In order to uphold that trust, the policy of zero tolerance, for any forms of cheating and plagiarism must be enforced. Please consult the appropriate student manuals, available online, for more information on this.

The Academic Conduct Code can be viewed online at <http://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/>

The GRS Academic Conduct Code can be viewed online at <http://www.bu.edu/cas/students/graduate/forms-policies-procedures/academic-discipline-procedures/>

UNCONVENTIONAL LEARNING PATTERNS AND PLURALISM

Students, with any unconventional learning patterns should discuss these with me directly. Special accommodations will be made to enable students of all learning styles to learn and to share, with focus on the content of study in an environment of high intellectual and moral standards that not only analyzes pluralism, but also practices it. Included in this concern to sustain a pluralistic environment will be the tone of conversation that respects clear thinking, even when that leads people in different directions, and forms of expression that dignify those who speak and those who listen at every moment.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

I have never experienced stress and worry as a stimulus for serious learning. Neither have I seen any research data that would make me feel otherwise. My goal is to support an environment that supports achievement through orderly learning, but without stress. To encourage students to keep up with the reading, to absorb, organize and retain the material in creative ways, to preserve an ongoing connection with me, and to provide me with “real time” feed back on the effectiveness of my communication and conveyance of ideas, you will be asked to submit a weekly $\frac{1}{2}$ page statement including 2-3 questions and 2-3 brief but thoughtful comments on the coming week’s assignments. The questions and comments should demonstrate, in non-trivial ways, that you have done your assignments in a serious way. These $\frac{1}{2}$ pagers should not take more than 10-15 minutes to write. They should be sent only as emails, not as attachments, and they should be sent with RN330 on the subject line so that they can be easily received and returned. They will be due no later than midnight on Sunday night, so that I have ample time to read, absorb into my preparations, and comment if need be. Grades will vary from E, for excellent, G for good, and I for inadequate. The deadline will be rigorously upheld. Recognizing that there are emergencies or unanticipated disruptions, each students will be allowed 3 opportunities in the semester to submit their papers late, but must provide an explanation that does not include anything that could be anticipated, and in which poor organization of one’s time is not the real problem. No excused late papers will be accepted later than midnight Monday night, the night before class. As another concession to reduce students’ ample worry and stress, only 7

submissions will be required between week 2 and week 11, a total of 10 weeks. You may twice miss submissions but please keep your own records on the number of your submissions. I most certainly will and will have to penalize those who do not fill their quotas.

There will be one in-class exam, somewhere at the 2/3 semester mark, so it will take place after your midterms for other courses, and before most projects for other courses become due. The exam, like the weekly comments, will be planned in a manner that is as stress free as possible for an exam, while helping students organize and retain the most important issues that they learn, and not only for grading purposes. The ability to memorize huge quantities of historical information, including dates, places, names of people, ideas, and movements, though integral as a foundation to doing history, is not what students will be tested for. It will be important to develop your own criteria for historical significance in detail and, particularly, in process. This means I will give you the specific content of the exam in advance.

Approximately three days before the exam, you will be given a long list of major people, places, events, and ideas. The first part of the test will include short identifications, multiple-choice questions, and the like. The second will emphasize your grasp of larger trends. These will cover the major documents, readings, audiovisual material, and class discussions. While good writing is always appreciated, it is not a requirement for this course. Good thinking and analytical abilities will have greater influence on how you do on exams. Therefore, the responses in this part of exams will be given in outline form. Please review what most people learn in mid-school about how to make an outline. It will be useful here and in your course project. The exams will be discussed in class at an early point in the semester so that students can better incorporate these as part of the learning experience.

Personalization to a healthy degree is a motive for good learning. It is also generally a motive for taking one course or another. To some measure, I suggest that you keep thinking about this without allowing new ways of personalization to be thwarted by old commitments. It is in that regard that I will describe the last course requirement. Each student will engage in research on an issue, a development, an aphorism, an interpretation with which she/he feels a strong personal identification or rejects with particular vehemence. In preparing an oral presentation of 5-7 minutes, each student will read a book and an article, generally an article that questions or qualifies the main point of the book. The book requirement is attached to another requirement: even if you are prepared to buy a book online, it is a course

requirement that you visit Mugar, or some other library with open stacks, and explore this venerable, yet somewhat outdated institution, and that you partake in the singular pleasure of “reading shelves.” The goal will be to provide you with depth and/or comparative perspectives. Wikipedia articles, for reasons that, by the end of the semester, if not sooner, students should well understand, are not to appear on your bibliography, though you are encouraged to peruse such articles with skepticism and not the different information and styles of validation that you will find in critically written and reviewed publications. In organizing the presentation, please prepare a 1-2 page proposal that will include the three following components: a clearly stated hypothesis, in less than 50 words, which should begin with, “I believe that...” and end with “...answers my question.” In an additional 200 words, you will develop and elaborate upon the hypothesis. The third part of this preparatory exercise is to present and annotate your bibliography. The annotations should include an explanation for why you chose this book and article and not any other. Students will return this proposal with whatever revisions I have proposed, along with the original marked up version, at least three days before their oral presentations. Graduate students and students in the School of Theology will have special requirements in accordance with their individual interests and following consultations with me.

8 Weekly ½ page comments	32 points
Written exam	30 points
Research hypothesis, development, and annotated bibliography	15 points
Oral presentation	15 points
Attendance and class participation	8 points

READINGS

Reading assignments will be drawn from the following books. All except the Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz book will be available on-line in e-books. You will find instructions on how to access these books below. The MR volume can be found on reserve at Mugar but will be sent to you by email in several

packages in time for class preparation. Other assigned articles will be distributed in similar fashion.

Laura Arnold Leibman, Messianism, *Secrecy and Mysticism: A New Interpretation of American Jewish Life* (LL)

Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism* (JS)

I. Metzker, ed. *Bintel Brief*.

Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz, eds., *The Jews in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, second edition. (MR)

Allow me to emphasize: readings for the week must be completed and ready for discussion by the Tuesday session. Diligence in this preparation will be considered as part of your class participation grade.

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

RN 330 - How to use e-books?

To access the books for this course online, use Boston University Ebrary.

Create an Ebrary account

In order to download (chapters of) a book, you must create an account. You can do this via this

link: <http://site.ebrary.com.ezproxy.bu.edu/lib/bostonuniv/newAccount.action>

Read a book

There are various ways to read an e-book:

1. Ebrary QuickView Reader

The ebrary QuickView Reader runs within your web browser and works with Windows, Mac OS, and Linux. This should launch automatically. You are reading the book in your browser. No downloading required.

2. Download chapters of the book

- Select the book you would like to read
- Click on the download button
- A new screen will open showing you different options; it is possible to download a certain chapter, or certain pages. Note: there is a maximum of 124 pages per download.
- The chapter/pages will be saved in PDF, to read this on your laptop or tablet please use Adobe software. Please find Kindle instructions below.

3. Ebrary mobile apps

There is an app for iPad/iPhone and Android. You will need to enter your ebrary and Adobe Editions account information in the Settings.

More information

For more information,

visit: <http://www.bu.edu/library/research/collections/ebooks/about-ebrary/>

How to read PDF files on your Kindle

1. Send the PDF file to your Kindle email (find this email by logging into Amazon, go to: manage my Kindle/devices).
2. Type in the subject line: convert
3. Connect your Kindle to Wi-Fi in order to download the PDF file
4. The PDF file will convert to a Kindle file and you are able to read it comfortably on your Kindle

COURSE OUTLINE

Week of September 2- Overview: What are the special experiences of American Jews that might have influenced their identities and attitudes towards other Jews and others, including Americans who were not Jews? Migration and Assimilation, Innovation and Revitalization

Reading, David Ellenson, “How Modernity Changed Judaism”

Leibman, Introduction

Films: Heritage, Part 8 American Jewry, first section; Synagogue architecture, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWJ2WJTUei8>

“Field trips” to three “Moorish” style synagogues within walking distance of the BU campus beginning with a class visit to Sherman Hall, formerly the second synagogue building of Temple Israel. It is 1 block from where the class meets in the last half hour of the September 4th class. Similar trips, organized in small groups, will be planned for a visit to Ohavai Shalom on Beacon St. several blocks up from the staircase at the end of Silber Way and Kehillat Israel on Harvard St., Brookline, midway between Commonwealth and Beacon. Class discussions will relate these building to the two paradigms on which our analysis of origins are based.

Case studies of prominent Jews in America through the end of the last decade of the 18th century.

Music: please find the Church anthems of the late 18th century American Revolutionary War patriot, John Billings on the web and listen to them, paying special attention to “Absalom, my son.”

Week of September 9- Two “paradigms” for understanding origins of American Jewry: Gentile Israelites and Colonial Jews, Remembering Homelands and Building New Homes

Readings: Jonathan Sarna, introd. and pp1-30, pay special attention to annex: demography;

Leibman, chapt. 1, 25-52, 211-258

NT Matthew, 5:14 and John Winthrop’s “City on the Hill”. 1630

Sephardi Jews and the Dutch administrator of New Amsterdam, Peter Stuvesant, 1654 (MR)

George Washington, and Judah Solomon, (MR)

Musical case studies: A comparison of biblical roots of Billings church hymns and fugues and how these biblical themes early Italian Renaissance and American Jewish Sephardi music, Leonard Bernstein, Mass, neo-Hasidic music and the influence of Shlomo Carlebach

Week of September 16th –Intensification, Diffusion and Multiple Zions

Sarna, pp 31-61

Mordecai Emmanuel Noah (MR)

Leibman, pp 57-76

Week of September 23- Religion and the Republic, The Making of a Nation and the Making of a Community: Revolutionary War-1860

Sarna, pp 62-124

Leibman, pp 123 -152; 211-228

Week of September 30-A Nation in Disunity, Jews and other Religious Communities on both sides of the Civil War and “Disenthraling Minds:” 1860-1881

Sarna, Jews and the Civil War

Sarna, pp124-159

Leibman, pp 83-115

Week of September 30th-Reconstruction and Mass Immigration: New and Old Shtetls, 1881-World War I

Film: Image before My Eyes; Brief selections from Dybbuk and Yiddish Theater

Music: American Jewish cantorial, liturgical, theater music, and lullabies

Leibman, pp 235-274, 281-305

Week of October 7th

Monday schedule on Tuesday. No class sessions

Week of October 14-Americanizaion of Judaism: Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionism

Sarna, pp 159-207

Leon Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue*, selection

David Kaufman, *The Shul with the Pool*, intro., conc.

Case Study: Louis Brandeis

Week of October 21-World War I Turning Points: European Jewry Divided, American Jewry Emerge as the New Center

Simon Kuznets, “Economic Structure and Life of the Jews”

Yehudah Bauer, *My Brother’s Keeper: A History of the American Joint distribution Committee*, intro, 1-2, 4, conclusion

Week of October 28-Religion and Ethnicity: The Rise of Zionism and the Shaping of American Jewish Identities, Jews Enter Hollywood through the Back Stage door

M. Urofsky, *American Zionism, Herzl to the Holocaust*, selections

M. Epstein, *Jewish Labor in the United States*, intro. & conclusion

Case Study Albert Einstein and a Divided Zionist Movement

P. Buhle, *Jews in American Popular Culture*, pp17-88

Film, *Jazz Singer*

Week of November 4-Reversals: Depression and Rising Antisemitism at Home, Rise of Nazism Abroad, Inter-war Period, Roots of American Pluralism and Individualism

David Wyman, *America and the Holocaust*

Sarna, chapt. 5

Film: *Gentleman’s Agreement*

Music: Leonard Bernstein, *Jeremiah Symphony*

Case Study Leonard Bernstein

Week of November 11-Post Holocaust American Jewry: The Exodus to the Suburbs, Ethnic Patterns of Mobility and Entrepreneurialism, Economic Inclusion, Rising Jewish Influence, Declining Jewish Content and Commitment

Daniel Elazar, “Moving Up: Ethnic Succession in America”

Hillel Levine and Lawrence Harmon, *Death of an American Jewish Community: A Tragedy of Good Intentions*, chap. 1-3, 5, conclusion

Sarna, pp 272-306

Film: What Makes Sammy run?

Case study: American Jewish Poetry and Politics in Greenwich Village

Week of November 18-Renewal and Assimilation, and the Social Construction of Ethnicity in America,1960s-2000

Sarna, pp 306-355

Charles Leibman, *The Ambivalent American Jew: Religion, Politics, and Family in American Life* conclusion

Music: Leonard Bernstein, *Mass*; Bob Dylan, Tom Lehrer

Film, Angel Levine

Case Study: Henry Kissenger and Madeleine Albright

Week of November 25-The Future of American Jews

Film: Heritage, part 8,conclusion

Sarna, Conclusion

Steven Cohen and Arnold Eisen, “The Jew Within: Self, Family, and Community in America”

Music: Leonard Cohen

Case Study: Senator Joe Lieberman and Sarah Silverman

**Week of December 2- Future of American “Uniqueness,”
Collective Individualistic values**

David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*, selections

Gary, Rosenblatt, “The Death of an American Jewish Dream,” Response,
Hillel Levine

Student Presentations

Week of December 9

Stuart Eizenstat, Mega-Trends

Student Presentations

